

REMARKS

Claims 1-52 are pending in the application. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the rejections in view of the following remarks.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 1-52 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Examiner has indicated that certain phrases in the claims are vague, indefinite and/or awkwardly and confusingly worded. Applicant respectfully submits that all of the recitations pointed out by the Examiner are definite and clear. However, in order to expedite prosecution, applicant will provide the Examiner with an explanation of each of the recitations pointed out to be indefinite. It should be noted that the following comments are not intended to limit the scope of the claims, but merely to explain to the Examiner that the claims are definite in view of the specification as originally filed.

With regard to the recitation, "means for reception of at least one carrier tape reel," the Examiner is directed to Figures 6a, 6b, 7 and 8, which illustrate the carrier, tape reel (9) being inserted into a tape magazine (40). It should be noted, however, that the present invention is not limited to a tape carrier reel being inserted into a tape magazine (40), but the present invention also includes the tape carrier reel (9) being inserted directly into a component-mounting machine. Referring to paragraphs [0049] through [0052]. The tape

magazine (40) is arranged for reception of the tape reel (9) as well as the tape guide (10). Specifically, the tape reel (9) is received within a compartment or open area of the tape magazine (4) or the component mounting machine. As would be clearly understood to one having ordinary skill in the art, any structure that would support the tape reel (9) in proper orientation within the tape magazine (40) or component-mounting machine would be included within the recitation, "means for reception of at least one carrier tape reel." Although this recitation is broad, applicant respectfully submits that this recitation is no indefinite as proposed by the Examiner.

With regard to the recitation, "feeding means arranged for engagement with holes provided on the carrier tape," the feeding mechanism or feeding device (8) includes pins, which engage with holes (5) in the component tape (1).

With regard to the first and second locking means, the present invention includes several different embodiments in Figures 6a, 6b, 7 and 8.

Referring to Figures 6a and 6b, the first locking means would be the catch lock (45a) and the axle (46) which cooperates with the second locking means on the tape guide (10), which are a protrusion (25a) and a recess (26).

In Figure 7, the first locking means is a snap-in locking element (45b) and an axle (46) which cooperate with a protrusion (25b) and a recess (26). In Figure 8, the first locking means is a pair of spaced-apart axles (45c and 46) which cooperate with a spring-loaded latch (25c) and a recess (26).

With regard to the recitation, "a snap-in arrangement for first and second locking means," as explained above, Figure 7 of the present invention illustrates a snap-in locking element (45b) and an axle (46) which cooperate with a protrusion (25b) and a recess (26). In view of this, this recitation is also definite and clear.

With regard to the recitation, "carrier tape retaining means for preventing accidental removal of the carrier tape from the tape guide when the tape guide is located away from the component mounting machine," the Examiner is directed to paragraph [0045] which states,

"[i]n order to prevent the component tape 1 from being accidentally separated from the tape guide 10, when the tape guide 10 and the component tape 1 is not attached to a component mounting machine, or a tape magazine, the tape guide 10 is provided with carrier tape retaining means for preventing accidental displacement of the component tape 1 along the tape guide 10."

In addition, paragraphs [0046] and [0047] describe several different alternatives for the retaining means of the present invention. For example, Figure 3 and paragraph [0046] describe the retaining means as a flexible support spring (20) and a counter support in the form of a separating means (30). It should be noted that the separating means is clearly illustrated in Figure 2 of the present invention.

As an alternative, the retaining means in Figure 4 and described in paragraph [0047] is a spring-loaded pivoted lever (20') which is provided with a locking pin (24) in a spring (23).

In view of the above, applicant respectfully submits that the above recitation is also definite and clear.

With regard to the recitation, "exposure means for exposing the components at a picking position," this recitation is clearly described. This aspect of the present invention is clearly described at paragraphs [0040] to [0044]. Specifically, the exposure means is the separating means (30).

In view of the above remarks, applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-52 are definite and clear. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the Examiner's rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, are respectfully requested.

Additional Comments

Although the above comments have been included for aiding the Examiner to understand the present invention, applicant respectfully submits that the above comments should not be used to narrow the claims in any way since the scope of the claims should be determined by a review of the present specification.

In addition, it is pointed out that claims 1-26 and claims 27-52 are directed to generally the same subject matter of the present invention, except that claims 1-22 include means-plus-function recitations, so that these claims should be interpreted in view of 35 U.S.C. § 112, sixth paragraph, while claims 27-52 do **not** include means-plus-function recitations and therefore should not be interpreted in view of 35 U.S.C. § 112, sixth paragraph.

In addition, at page 3 of the Examiner's Office Action, the Examiner indicates that no prior art rejections have been applied with regard to claims 1-52 since there is confusion and uncertainty as to the proper interpretation of the limitations of the claims. Applicant respectfully submits that the claims as presented are definite and clear. Upon a thorough review of the present specification, the scope of the claims would be readily determined by one having ordinary skill in the art. In view of this, if the Examiner provides a rejection in view of the prior art in a future Office Action, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner make this Office Action non-final. The claims were not so indefinite that the Examiner could not have provided an Office Action in view of the prior art or indicated that the present claims defined over the prior art.

Information Disclosure Statement

Information Disclosure Statements were submitted to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office on June 22, 2001, September 21, 2001 and May 7, 2002. In addition, co-pending letters were submitted to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office on November 2, 2001 and March 31, 2003.

In the Examiner's Office Action dated May 20, 2003, no comments were provided by the Examiner with regard to any of the above submissions. It is respectfully requested that the Examiner confirm receipt of the above documents in the next Office communication.

CONCLUSION

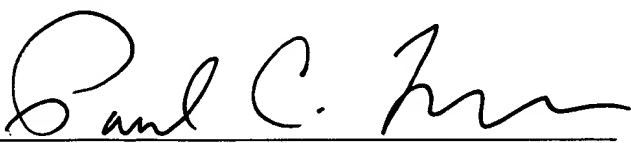
In view of the above Remarks, reconsideration of the rejections and favorable action on all the claims are respectfully solicited.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Paul C. Lewis (Reg. No. 43,368) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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